Unit .04

Session .06

God Delivers His People

Scripture

Exodus 13:17-22; 14:1-4,13-14,21-22,26-28

17 When Pharaoh let the people go, God did not lead them along the road to the land of the Philistines, even though it was nearby; for God said, "The people will change their minds and return to Egypt if they face war." **18** So he led the people around toward the Red Sea along the road of the wilderness. And the Israelites left the land of Egypt in battle formation. **19** Moses took the bones of Joseph with him, because Joseph had made the Israelites swear a solemn oath, saying, "God will certainly come to your aid; then you must take my bones with you from this place." **20** They set out from Succoth and camped at Etham on the edge of the wilderness. **21** The Lord went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud to lead them on their way during the day and in a pillar of fire to give them light at night, so that they could travel day or night. **22** The pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night never left its place in front of the people. … **1** Then the Lord spoke to Moses: **2** "Tell the Israelites to turn back and camp in front of Pi-hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea; you must camp in front of Baal-zephon, facing it by the sea. **3** Pharaoh will say of the Israelites: They are wandering around the land in confusion; the wilderness has boxed them in. **4** I will harden Pharaoh's heart so that he will pursue them. Then I will receive glory by means of Pharaoh and all his army, and the Egyptians will know that I am the Lord." So the Israelites did this. … **13** But Moses said to the people, "Don't be afraid. Stand firm and see the Lord's salvation that he will accomplish for you today; for the Egyptians you see today, you will never see again. **14** The Lord will fight for you, and you must be quiet." … **21** Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea. The Lord drove the sea back with a powerful east wind all that night and turned the sea into dry land. So the waters were divided, **22** and the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with the waters like a wall to them on their right and their left. … **26** Then the Lord said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea so that the water may come back on the Egyptians, on their chariots and horsemen." **27** So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and at daybreak the sea returned to its normal depth. While the Egyptians were trying to escape from it, the Lord threw them into the sea. **28** The water came back and covered the chariots and horsemen, plus the entire army of Pharaoh that had gone after them into the sea. Not even one of them survived.

Intro Options

Main Point:
God protects His people.

Option 1

Display a variety of items (or images of items from the Internet) and play a game of "What's It Worth?" Hold up one item and instruct students to state what they believe the item costs. After each student has revealed a guess, share the correct price. Award one point to the student with the guess closest to the actual price. Continue with each item and declare a winner. After the game, for each item, ask: Is this item worth this price? Why or why not? How do you determine how much something is worth? Point out that the prices of things change, but God's value never changes.

- **Write *worship* on the board. What does worship mean to you? (List synonyms or responses.)**
- **What makes God worthy of your worship?**

Share that God does not have worth just because we assign it to Him—He is worthy because He is God. This study will focus on why we should worship God and why only God is worthy of our worship.

Option 2

Play a quick game of Prison Break. Place students into two even teams. You can also play leaders vs. students depending on the number of students in your group. Have some way to distinguish the teams, like two colors of arm bands, colored flags, or even two different colors of bandannas students can tie around their wrists. You will also need dodge balls.

Designate two areas as jails for each team on opposite sides of the room. Place the dodge balls at the center of the room and line teams up across from each other. Teams should throw a ball at opposing team members. When someone gets hit, they are stuck in "jail." When someone catches a ball thrown at them, that player's jailed team members are free. Also, just for fun, at any point, the leaders can yell, "Jail break!" which will send all jailed team members back into play. The point is, the students can do nothing to free themselves from jail; only their team members or the leaders have the power to rescue them.

Set a designated time for students to play, then draw parallels between the game and the way God rescued the Israelites from the Egyptians and how He rescues us from sin through Jesus.

TEACHING PLAN

After rescuing His people from a night of terror and heartache through the sacrifice of a substitute, God continued His rescue plan to deliver His people out of Egypt. In Exodus 13:17-22, we see that when the people left Egypt, they didn't take the most direct route back to the land of their ancestors. Instead, God took them on an irregular route not only because the people were not ready to face the threat of the Philistines, but also because it would certainly cause them to realize once again that God was the One actually fighting on their behalf. Before too long, the people would be boxed in between two formidable forces: the Red Sea and an angry army.

- **When have you been able to look back on your life and see how God has guided you? How does looking at God's guidance in the past increase your confidence in His future guidance?**

Read Exodus 14:1-4.

God led the Israelites from Egypt in an unexpected way. Instead of heading toward their ancient homeland, they took an indirect route. Pharaoh heard the Israelites had turned back and camped in the worst possible of places. They were boxed in—trapped. Of course, he probably thought the Israelites made a mistake and their God had abandoned or betrayed them. It was time to act; It was time to avenge his son and all of the others who had perished on that terrible night. He would lead his army—one of the mightiest in the world—out to where the Israelites were camped. They were trapped, so he would crush them, right? Wrong. Pharaoh would indeed march his forces out to victory, but it would not be his victory. It wouldn't be Israel's victory, either. It would be the Lord's.

- **Why do you think it's important that God's saving actions on our behalf demonstrate our weakness and His strength?**

Escaping Egypt was only the beginning for the Israelites. God knew they had to continue on toward the promised land, which was not barren but inhabited by other nations with strong armies and fortified cities. In the victory God would give His people, He would show them His power. He would give them what they needed to continue to follow Him in faith.

99 Essential Doctrines *(p. 56, DDG)*

God Is Omnipotent

God is all-powerful: there is nothing God cannot do so long as it does not contradict His own nature or law. God has power and authority over the universe He created, from the largest solar system to the smallest particle. Affirming that God is all-powerful does not mean God can sin—that would go against His perfect moral nature. As Christians, we rest in the belief that the God who has all power is good, and we gain great comfort by knowing an all-powerful God is working for our good and joy.

COMMENTARY

Main Point:
God protects His people.

Exodus 13

13:17-22. God had delivered His people from Egypt as He promised, but that was only half the story. Rescuing them from bondage was just the first part of His plan; He still wanted to return the people to the land He had given to Abraham and their ancestors (Ex. 3:8). Joseph had brought Jacob's family from that land to Egypt 430 years earlier. It was time for the patriarch's descendants to go home. And God would lead the way.

Up to this point in the Exodus account, God had mostly worked through Moses. God would speak to Moses, then Moses would act on His behalf. God could have continued that practice here. He could have spoken to Moses and told him where to lead the people, but He didn't. Instead, God chose to go ahead of the people Himself—in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. In this kind act of God, the people would be assured of His constant presence. There would be no mistake that they were precisely where God wanted them to be—even though their journey would take them in unexpected directions. There would also be no mistake that God had delivered them from Egypt only to abandon them in the wilderness. His presence was on display before them always.

The Israelites followed the Lord and set out toward the land in battle formation, but they would not raise a sword or hurl a spear for some time. God chose an irregular route for His people because He knew they were not ready for war. Their weapons were surely modest and they had no military training. Marching in battle formation would not keep them safe; God would see to that. God guided His people away from the Philistines to protect them; He was their shield. But God was setting the stage for an even greater demonstration of His protection over His people. Their journey would eventually box them in between the Red Sea and the army of an angry Pharaoh. It would be in that moment of helplessness that God's people would see God was not only their shield, but He would also be the One who would fight for them.

In Defense *(p. 57, DDG)*

People often ask why they don't see big, miraculous displays of God's power today, like the parting of the Red Sea. While there are a number of ways to respond, it is important to mention the purpose behind miracles in the Bible. For the most part, the Bible shows that miracles were intentionally and strategically done to verify a word from God. For example, the gospel spreading to these unreached people groups who were hearing the message of Jesus for the first time in the Book of Acts. Miracles done by God through the apostles served as a visible demonstration that the message these men were proclaiming wasn't their own, but God's.

Do miracles like these happen today as the gospel continues to move forth? Christians answer this differently. However, the important point to make is that big flashy miracles aren't necessary to support our faith. Like the disciple Thomas, we already have plenty of reasons to believe the Christian faith to be true. We can look at the world around us and marvel at God's fine-tuning in bringing this masterpiece into existence. We can look at the changed lives of the disciples and those we know. Ultimately, we can look to Jesus Himself, sit under His teachings in the Gospels, and begin to realize He is more compelling than any miracle we might witness.

TEACHING PLAN

As the Israelites camped by the Red Sea, they looked up and saw dust in the distance. It didn't take long to realize it was not a sand storm; it was the Egyptians coming after them for vengeance. In a single moment, the Israelites' praises of God gave way to accusations (Ex. 14:10-12). In their fear, the people complained against God.

- **Do you usually react like the Israelites when your circumstances become difficult? Why do you think we are so quick to stress out and whine when life gets tough?**

Of course, fear and complaining made little sense in light of what they knew and had seen. God had shown His power. He bent the whole natural order of things: hail, wind, disease, life, death, and blood. Creation had been used by the Lord to serve His sovereign purposes. He had slaughtered all the Egyptian gods, and He was about to do something else unforgettable.

Activity

Place students into groups and tell them they are the official Complaint Department for God's people. Ask them to compile a list of complaints the Israelites made in this account, as well as any similar complaints they hear Christians (or themselves) make today. After they have compiled the list, instruct them to reply to each complaint from a Christian worldview with the goal of showing that the complainer is responding out of fear rather than faith.

Read Exodus 14:13-14,21-22,26-29.

When all seemed lost to the Israelites, God provided the way of escape, not around what had seemed to seal their fate, but through it. God sent an east wind to stop the waters of the sea and the Israelites passed through the Red Sea on dry ground. Once they had passed through the waters, God released the liquid walls over the Egyptians, not leaving a single warrior alive.

- **How have you seen the power of God after waiting a long time for Him to act?**

As God stepped in and saved His faithless people, He offered us a clear picture of the gospel. God's salvation of the Israelites is a shadow of a greater salvation that would come in Christ. Look at the parallels:

- We are saved from bondage. Like the Israelites who were delivered from their enslavement, which is a picture of salvation, we are freed from the bondage of sin through Jesus.
- We are saved by grace. In Exodus 14:13-14, Moses tells the Israelites to stand still and watch as the Lord fought for them and provided salvation. The principle of grace couldn't be clearer here. Salvation is not about what we do but about what God has done for us in Jesus. (See Rom. 4:3-8.)
- We are saved through a mediator. The Israelites didn't drown is because they had a mediator. Consider Moses' role: He's identified with the Israelites, and He's identified with God. But there's another mediator—a better one—Jesus Christ. He was not rebuked for just one sin, but this Mediator took on God's wrath for all our sin. And this Mediator was God. (See John 1:1.) Jesus is the only way we cross over.

- **Why do you think it is important to see the connection between the Red Sea and Jesus' work on the cross?**

COMMENTARY

Main Point:
God protects His people.

Exodus 1:1

14:1-4. The Israelites couldn't see what God was doing. As the Egyptian army approached, the Israelites cried out in terror to God for help, even though they didn't believe help would come. In their very next breath, the people asked Moses why he thought the graves in Egypt weren't good enough for them. They would have been better off to remain in Egypt as slaves than to come into the wilderness to die (Ex. 14:11-13).

The Egyptians couldn't see what God was doing either. Pharaoh chased the Israelites with his army—hundreds of chariots racing toward their cornered slaves (Ex. 14:5-9). Surely the Egyptians anticipated an easy victory. The Israelites were no match for their army. They would either slaughter or recapture every man, woman, and child wedged between them and the sea.

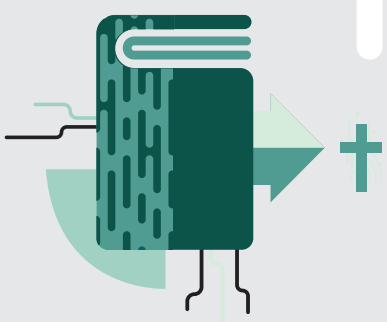
Of course, God would eventually use this situation to be a very teachable moment for His people. He would strengthen the powerless and He would weaken the powerful. Everyone—Israelites and Egyptians—would know that He is God. God was gracious to both Pharaoh and the Egyptians and Moses and the Israelites in this final encounter between them in the Exodus. God had revealed Himself to the Egyptians—He had demonstrated how He was superior to their false gods. Through what He did to Pharaoh's army, He proclaimed His might and glory to that nation once more. They had not repented; this was one more opportunity for them to do so. With their army gone—in a weak and exposed state—would they cast aside the gods of their pride and turn to God in humility?

14:29. The Red Sea reminds us of God's distinct activity throughout Scripture: the way He uses water to bring about judgment and cleansing and, thus, redemption. He takes His people safely through water, out of a miserable state, and rescues them.

Noah's ark, Moses' basket, the parting of the Red Sea, the crossing of the Jordan River, and Jonah's three days in the fish—these are all examples of God delivering through water. God has given us these stories in Scripture for our instruction, so that we may have a better understanding of the deliverance we have been given in Christ. A deliverance that looked just as impossible—even more so—as the Israelites' deliverance from the closing vice of Egypt's army and the Red Sea. A deliverance where God made the impossible possible, rescuing us from the clutches of sin and death through the sacrifice of His Son.

(p. 58, DDG) Christ Connection

God made a way of deliverance for His people through the Red Sea. In a similar manner, God made a way of deliverance for us by sending His Son, Jesus. Through faith in Jesus we are saved from sin and death.



GOD DELIVERS HIS PEOPLE

Exodus 13:17–22; 14:1–4, 13–14, 21–22, 26–28

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JESUS CONNECTION

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LIFEWISE QUALITY

OBEDIENCE – Listening to and following through with instructions from those in authority.

HEAD

God continued His plan to rescue the Israelites from bondage and captivity by leading them out of Egypt. How did He ensure the Israelites knew exactly when and where to go?

Give examples of how the Israelites obeyed God as He led them through uncharted territory.

HEART

In the Bible, obedience is not just blindly following orders. It's based on God's authority and character. He is good and always keeps His promises, so we can trust Him and obey. How might that idea help you obey God and the authorities He's put in your life more willingly?

What are the primary ways God guides and directs His people today? Do you think these ways make it easier or harder to obey Him?

HANDS

True obedience means following through on an instruction completely, but sometimes it's tempting to obey only partway. For example, you may do a chore every other day or only when reminded. Paul encourages us to behave differently in Ephesians 6:7 — "Serve with a good attitude, as to the Lord and not to people." Think of 1–2 ways you have been content to obey only partially, and commit to obeying completely this week.